GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

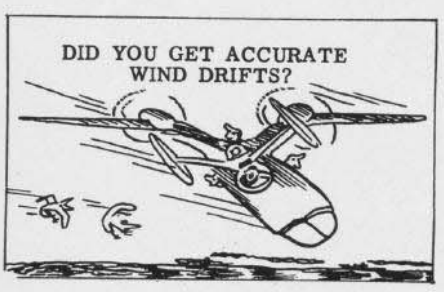
Your Life Depends on Oxygen

The radio gunner, on an oxygen familiarization flight in an SBD–4 was instructed to start using his oxygen at 12,000 feet. The plane ascended to 17,600 feet and remained above 12,000 feet for approximately 20 minutes. On returning to the line, the gunner was found unconscious with the oxygen mask still on his face. All efforts to revive him were of no avail.

Examination of the MSA Rebreather showed the lock nut on the admission valve adjusting screw to be loose and the screw to have backed off sufficiently to prevent oxygen from entering the rebreather bag. Several other rebreathers in the squadron were found in similar condition.

▶ *BUREAU COMMENT.*—This is a maintenance problem. All rebreathers should be checked frequently to insure proper operation, including a check of this lock nut for tightness. An Instruction Manual and Parts List is furnished with each rebreather. Figure 1 of this manual is a general assembly drawing showing the location of the admission valve adjusting screw and lock nut. Page 7 gives an explanation of the function of this valve. BuAer restricted letter, serial No. 4703 of January 11, 1943, explains how to adjust this valve.

Oxygen equipment is life-saving equipment. As such it merits the most careful attention. It is of vital concern to all squadrons that competent personnel be assigned to the upkeep of all oxygen equipment and that all flight crews be fully instructed in its use.



Numskull-ery

Washing out a brand new JRF–5 by landing it in the water with the wheels *down*.

The pilot knew better; he had 2,150 hours. He called it "temporary preoccupation"; said he "mechanically" lowered his wheels; admitted not using the landing check-off list.

Grampaw Pettibone says:

"Temporary preoccupation," my ankle! They wouldn't print what I call it.

This is the sister dunce act of the one which gets so much publicity; that of landing on an airfield with the wheels *up*.

Here's the case of a famous landing made before retractable wheels were invented to confuse pilots: A torpedo plane squadron, which had been operating on wheels, had just recently gone back on floats. The squadron commander, upon returning from his first flight after this transfer, started to land on the station field (no doubt, due to "temporary preoccupation"). He was barely prevented from doing so by the radioman, who frantically warned him that he was on floats.

This pilot then circled the field and made a good landing in the bay. After taxying up to the ramp, he got out on the wing, turned to the radioman and said, "Good work! That certainly was a dumb stunt, trying to land on the field on floats." And with those few kind words, he jumped from the wing onto the field—I mean into the water up to his neck.

Both to Blame

A fatal take-off collision occurred under the following circumstances. The pilot of an F2A taxied to take-off position on the right side of the correct runway. The pilot of an SNJ taxied past the F2A down the left side of this runway and started across, evidently intending to take off on another runway. The tower called the SNJ pilot, notifying him of the correct runway. It is not known whether this communication was received. In the meantime, the F2A commenced its take-off. The tower called the F2A, attempting to stop the take-off, but this message was not received. Upon collision, both aircraft burst into flames, resulting in the death of the SNJ pilot.

The Trouble Board considered both pilots equally responsible. One pilot for not positively insuring the runway was clear before starting take-off; the other pilot for passing an airplane in take-off position, for not checking the wind and for not checking the take-off course. Communications in both cases left much to be desired.

Prop Trouble

Propellers, like everything else in aviation, need to be handled intelligently to give proper service. Pilots cannot be expected to know all about adjustment and overhaul of propellers; these are matters for propeller experts. Pilots must, however, in self-defense, know how to operate them properly in the air. Here are a few of the pilot errors in connection with propellers; culled from recent aircraft accident reports:

(a) Attempting to take-off with prop in high pitch. You can seldom get off in this setting, but accidents occur because pilots persist in their take-off run too long. If you aren't picking up speed properly, check your propeller setting—and don't carry a doubtful take-off too far down the runway.

(b) Landing in high pitch. This is the twin-sister error of (a). You can land safely, if everything goes right. It is only when you have an emergency

and have to give her the gun to go around again that trouble arises. Then you won't have the necessary power to climb. And when you need that power you need it right now. That is why all landings should be made in low pitch.

(c) Your power seems to fall off or just isn't there, but the engine sounds all right. When this occurs, or your rate of climb is slow, or similar difficulty is encountered, get in the habit of checking your propeller setting. The trouble is often there.

(d) If your propeller control unit becomes inoperative with the electric propeller in high pitch, remember, you have a manual control unit. Use it!

Get acquainted with your propeller; learn its habits and its troubles. Know how to operate it.

Classification of Reports

It is noted that numerous Aircraft Trouble Reports, Boards of Investigation and Administrative Reports are being classified as confidential when they do not contain anything of a confidential nature. In order to simplify the handling of paper work as much as possible, it is requested that these reports be not made confidential unless so required by the nature of their content or for security reasons.

In this connection, whenever confidential photographs are enclosed with any report, the entire report must be made confidential. Photographs of aircraft accidents are not necessarily confidential and should not be so marked unless they contain information of a confidential nature. The standard rubber stamp inscription, as now used on the reverse of such photographs, will insure that they are not released for publication unless specifically cleared by the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics.

Rubber Necks Aren't Rationed

A student pilot in an SNJ–4 was unable to retract one wheel after take-off. Seeing another plane in the area, he flew over to it to show his predicament. In the meantime a third pilot had sighted the crippled airplane and flew over to warn the pilot. This third pilot had good intentions, but his execution wasn't so good. In his enthusiasm he neglected to watch out for other aircraft—he ran right into the second airplane from behind.

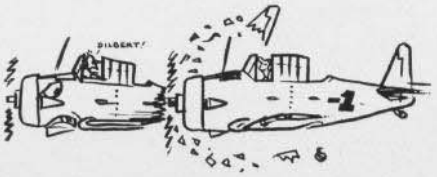
Grampaw Pettibone says:

It takes a swivel-neck pilot to avoid collisions these days. It requires constant vigilance, and the danger isn't only straight ahead. It is also above, below, and on either side of you, and, as in this case, even behind you. Keep a constant lookout!

And this doesn't mean "lookout" as the conductor meant when he passed through the train and yelled, "Lookout for the tunnel!" In that case an immigrant opened the window and did, and got hit on the head. I really mean LOOK!

Parachute Sense

An accident which occurred recently in the Aircraft Delivery Unit at NAS Dallas gives several pointers on parachute sense. Two SNJ's collided resulting in the complete destruction of the rear fuselage section of one of the planes. The graphic statement of the pilot shows the value of keeping a clear head:

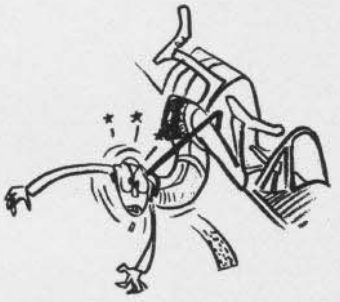


"While engaged in level flight at 7,000 feet, one of the wing planes struck the rear of my ship and cut off the tail or fuselage a few feet back of the rear seat. A few seconds before being struck, I noticed that a collision was inevitable, as his propeller was within a few feet of my fuselage. I applied full power just as I was struck. My ship nosed straight up and then fell into a forward rolling fall with the nose and remaining fuselage rotating around an axis from one wing tip to the other.

"The plane made about four of these forward somersaults, during which time I found that the aileron pressures remained positive. By holding right stick the plane rolled to the right and started to spin violently with the nose down. After a few turns the nose came up and the plane engaged in a flat spin with the nose close to the horizon. I knew I would have to leave the ship so I shut off the gas, the ignition, and the master switch. As my clothes were in the rear seat, I thought I could prevent a fire and be able to save them.

"I tried to stop the propeller by engaging the starter, but I had already shut off the master switch so the starter would not engage. As the ship was spinning to the right, I believed the best plan was to jump between the right wing and the nose. I then opened the hood at 5,000 feet, unlatched the safety belt, stood up on the seat and jumped.

"At this point, I nearly broke my neck as *I had forgotten to remove my*



head set. However, I fell clear of the plane and dropped straight down without rolling. It did not seem as though I was falling and everything was quiet. I could hear the plane above me making a swishing sound.

"The small change from my pocket was falling up past me. My concern at this point was that the plane was falling directly above me and it might strike the parachute when I opened it. I did not feel as though I had a parachute on so I felt around to make sure it as there. I waited until the ground was very close before opening the chute. The plane missed me a few feet and crashed below me. The wind drifted the chute over some trees, so in landing the branches tore off my remaining clothes.

"As I removed the chute harness, I noticed parts of the plane still falling and also that my plane was burning. My clothes were destroyed. The other plane had only damaged his propeller and landed on a road a short distance away. The free fall and the ride prior to leaving the ship were very enjoyable, although the moment the chute opened the jolt was quite severe as was the landing on the ground. It surprised me that I had so much time to think, and also that there was at no time any cause for panic or fright. Would like to again make a jump at some time, only under more favorable conditions."